

GARDEN NOTES

JINKA FALLS

16 JINKA STREET, HAWKER.



11-12 OCTOBER 2025

HISTORY

Jinka Falls is a newly established 307sqm garden in Hawker that demonstrates what can be achieved in a small space with thoughtful design and determination. Our garden celebrates the beauty of Australian ecosystems on a small scale, giving us a home amongst the gum trees in the heart of Belconnen. We purchased our home in 2023 and built the garden 18 months ago on a shoestring budget, from what was previously mostly paved and flat. Sometimes it was a real community effort; we used hot meals to entice friends to give us a hand with digging and shifting soil when we needed it, and Cecilija's colleague Cam Wilson lent his expertise to assist us with the stream and ponds. He was a huge help during the front garden build, as well as a soundboard for the design concepts in the front garden.

Having both studied permaculture design, it was important for us to grow food. The back garden has a small-scale orchard, berries, a vegetable garden, and lots of flowers for Cecilija to cut for the house and to give away to loved ones. The big-ticket item of the garden was the stone wall, built by our dear friend David Korda of Homestead Stonework, assisted by Aidan. The stone wall and terracing has drastically increased our growing space, replacing what was previously a paved area and clothesline. We now hang our clothes on a rope out the front – a sacrifice we've made to gain additional growing space.

Our style has been influenced by places we love, people we've worked with over the years, and prominent naturalistic garden designers like Piet Oudolf and Michael McCoy – bringing the language of softness and complexity into an Australian context is important. We love the work of Fiona Brockhoff, and Edna Walling (so much so that we named our puppy after her), and her design principals still feel very relevant today. We planted a Serviceberry (*Amalanchier canadensis*) in front of our bedroom window – a species Edna used in her gardens that has beautiful autumn colour and edible berries.

Some challenges have been juggling materials in a small space, burst pipes in the middle of winter leading to saturated clay soils and drowned plants, heavy late frosts that have affected even frost-hardy young plantings, pests and disease in the back garden (particularly possum damage), and sharing the garden with our two active dogs. The only way to give new plants a chance is to fence things off as required. The harsh western sun is a challenge during the warmer months, and we're really looking forward to our taller plantings growing up and providing more shade for us and our other plants. As two passionate gardeners who would absolutely love an acre of garden, it has also been challenging coming to terms with the fact that we won't be able to grow everything we love in this garden.

Gardening is central to our lives – it is our passion and our work. It brings us solace when life gets hard, and brings us together to celebrate amazing everyday moments, whether that's new buds, a nest, a different insect, or the first eggplant. We love seeing local birds discovering our garden and hearing different species of

frogs; it gives us a lot of hope during challenging times, when biodiversity is under enormous strain. We know that gardening changes lives and communities – it certainly has changed ours.

Our favourite part of the garden changes with the seasons and the light. In summer, the pond and the fernery bring coolness and respite, and a verdant outlook. In autumn the kitchen garden is bursting with veggies and flowers. In winter, the best spot in the house is the armchair in the sun, overlooking the pond as the water sends ripple reflections across our living room ceiling. In spring, watching the buds swell on our fruit trees is a joy. The most glorious time of day is the morning, when the sun catches the flower spikes of the grasses.

We hope that our garden can give people inspiration to try things out even in a small space – this is important as our cities become denser, and affordable housing is so hard to come by. In a courtyard garden, pavers can be pulled up, concrete can be broken and lifted, and there can be niches created for the plants you love. We feel very lucky to have a garden of our own where we can do that, after many years of renting and moving around. Visitors to our home always comment that they can hear the frogs and crickets down the street before they even get to the house – to us, that feels like success.

FEATURES

Cam brought his expertise with water to our design, guiding us in the installation of **passive water harvesting** via infiltration beds, fed by pipes from the garage roofs to help future-proof and build soil health.

The ponds are a huge asset for biodiversity and for creating biomass – the algae and excess growth of aquatic plants make the most fantastic compost.

The **black compost bins** work very well for us in a small space, as we can rodent proof them and move them around depending on what parts of the garden need enrichment.

The front path was built by Cam and Cecilija as a curve, after demolishing the old pebblecrete path that was very wide and ran straight from the fence to the front door. This allowed us to soften the built structures and gain extra privacy. The pavers we used were pulled up from the back garden and are spaced slightly wider than normal to allow *Dichondra repens* to creep into the gaps and soften the edges.

Our front garden looks out into trees beyond our boundary; this is a **view** that we are very happy to borrow. The Eucalypts out the front are *E. gregsoniana*, which is a beautiful cool climate mallee that can be trained to work in a small garden. We purchased two as advanced specimens for Aidan's birthday last year, and the other multi-stemmed tree was planted as a tube and is doing amazingly well. We love their red stems and pale trunks. Though many of the things we've planted will outgrow their space, we see **pruning, training, and editing over time** as crucial and enjoyable maintenance tasks to achieve the look that we want in our garden. We are very active participants in the growing process!

TOILETS

Closest toilets are located at the Hawker Shops.

GARDEN OWNERS

Cecilija Rubenis and Aidan Beiboer